

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

1-60: (previously cancelled)

61. (previously amended) A method for making an absorbent composite useful for personal hygiene articles which comprises: treating a wood fiber pulp containing wood fibers with a base at a temperature ranging from 15° C. to about 60°C. thereby forming a treated wood fiber pulp containing wood fibers; fluffing the treated wood fiber pulp to form an absorbent sublayer material comprised of fluffed base-treated wood fiber pulp; providing at least one fluid permeable topsheet layer and at least one substantially fluid impermeable backsheet layer; and interposing the sublayer material between the topsheet layer and the backsheet layer wherein the treated wood fiber pulp is not subjected to chemical crosslinking.

62. (previously amended) The method of claim 61 wherein the sublayer material contains about 25 to about 100% by weight of treated wood fiber pulp and from about 0 to about 75% by weight of wood fiber pulp which is not base-treated.

63-65. (previously cancelled)